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ABSTRACT

Some research has found that women's retirement from the labor force produces significant changes in their lives and requires further investigation. The effects of career pattern and retirement on activity involvement and life satisfaction for women who had been in the work force was investigated. Subjects were members of the Terman Study of the Gifted who were either employed (N=39) or who had retired (N=66). Subjects were also classified as either career workers or job holders. Aspects of life satisfaction were assessed along with satisfaction with income-producing work for subjects who were not yet fully retired. Subjects were asked about their aspiration level in comparison to friends of the same age and sex, and rated their frequency of participation in 27 activities. Findings indicated that job holders felt less advantaged then career women in the aging years. Although income workers and career women did not differ on life satisfaction in family areas, they differed in the area of work satisfaction. Retirement data indicated that individuals with different work orientations adjusted to retirement differently. The results indicate significant variations in activity involvement and life satisfaction in relation to lifetime achievement patterns and retirement. (RC)

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Activity Involvement in Aging Women:

Career Pattern and Retirement

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Activity Involvement in Aging Women:

Career Pattern and Retirement

Despite the significant increase in women's participation in the labor force in recent years, little is known concerning the life cycle implications of work for women. It has generally been assumed that family roles remain central for women, even when they are involved in full-time employment. Atchley (1976), however, has reported data showing that 60% of a large sample of working women ranked being considered good at their work among the three most important goals in their lives. Moreover, Sears and Barbee (1977), in reporting results of the 1972 survey of the Terman women, then an average age of sixty-two, found differences between subjects' actual work patterns and preferred work patterns as the subjects viewed their lives retrospectively. When subjects were asked to indicate the work patterns they would prefer to have pursued as they looked back on their lives, many of the women who had been homemakers or who had worked for income alone indicated that they would now choose a career.

Furthermore, although a great deal is known concerning the effects of retirement for men, such as loss of the meaning of work and disruption of interpersonal relationships in work (Carp, 1972), retirement has not been extensively studied in women. It has been assumed that retirement from paid employment has little significance for women, due to their greater involvement in family roles. There are indications, however, that women's retirement from the work force produces significant changes in their lives (Atchley, 1976; Streib & Schneider, 1971) and requires further investigation.

In view of the scarcity of knowledge concerning the implications of women's work history for their later lives, the present study was conducted to investigate the effects of career pattern and retirement on activity involve-

ment and life satisfaction for women who have been in the work force. A major purpose of the study was to examine the relationship of activity involvement to life satisfaction and happiness for older women, as it varies in accordance with career pattern and retirement status.

The subjects chosen for the study were members of Lewis M. Terman's study of the gifted. The study is based on a mailout survey conducted in 1977 when the mean age of the sample was sixty-six. This sample of women provided the unique opportunity for the investigation of the relationship between lifetime career pattern and satisfaction later in life for women of considerable intellectual potential, who have chosen widely differing courses in regard to occupational attainment. Terman's study of high IQ children in urban California was begun in 1922. Throughout the fifty-five years of the study (Terman et al, 1925; Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Terman & Oden, 1947, 1959; Oden, 1968; P. Sears & Barbee, 1977; R. Sears, 1977; P. Sears, 1979), the women have proved to be a sample of considerable interest, representating a variety of lifestyles and orientations.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for the present study are members of the Terman Study of the Gifted who were either engaged in full-time employment at the time of the last Terman survey in 1977, or who had retired from full-time employment. The present study included 39 women who were employed full-time, and 66 women who were retired. In addition, the subjects were classified as either career workers or job holders according to their response to an item on the 1972 survey concerning lifetime career pattern. This item requested that subjects indicate which of the following characterized their lives: I have been primarily a homemaker; I have pursued a career through most of my adult life;

I have pursued a career except during the period when I was raising a family; I have done considerable work for needed income, but would not call it a career. Those responding to either of the career options were classified as career workers, (75 subjects), and those responding to the last option were classified as job holders (30 subjects).

Life satisfaction

In investigating the relationship of achievement and retirement patterns to life satisfaction and activity involvement, the present study included a number of variables measuring aspects of life satisfaction. An item concerning level of satisfaction with present living arrangements, measured on a 5-point scale, and an item concerning present happiness, measured on a 3-point scale, were included. Satisfaction with income producing work for subjects who were not fully retired was also assessed.

In addition, eight areas of potential life satisfaction were included to measure overall level of satisfaction: income-producing work, avocational activities or hobbies, present or most recent marriage, children, friendships and social contacts, community service activities, participation in cultural activities, and recreation. Each item was scored on a 5-point scale. The scores of all items applicable to each subject's life were averaged to obtain a summary life satisfaction score.

Ambitions and aspirations

Subjects were asked how ambitious or aspiring they considered themselves to be as compared to their friends and colleagues of the same age and sex in regard to four areas: excellence in work, proficiency in avocational pursuits and hobbies, recognition by others of your accomplishments, and maintaining an excellent standard of living. The responses were scored on a 5-point scale.

Participation in activities

Subjects rated their frequency of participation in twenty-seven activities on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) never to (4) frequently. On the basis of item analyses, items were assigned to four scales: sociability, achievement motivation, intellectual vitality, and recreational orientation. The Cronbach alphas for the four scales ranged from .88 to .91. A recent activity score was computed by summing the number of activities recently undertaken.

RESULTS

In order to investigate retirement in relation to type of career pattern (career worker versus job holder), a series of two-way analyses of covariance (career pattern X retirement status) was performed on the dependent variables, with age as the covariate. The retirement status dimension included two groups: full-time working subjects and retired subjects. Full-time workers were significantly younger than retired subjects, F (1,101)=20.623, $p < .0001$, with the mean age for full-time subjects 63.23, and the mean age for retired subjects, 66.79.

Career pattern

Life satisfaction. An examination of career pattern effects showed a consistent pattern of results in regard to the life satisfaction measures. A significant career pattern effect was found for satisfaction with present living arrangements, F (1,100)=7.672, $p < .01$, with job holders reporting lower levels of satisfaction than career workers (see Table 1 for career pattern means).

Insert Table 1 about here

There was a significant career pattern effect for overall life satisfaction, $F(1,84)=4.740$, $p < .05$, with career workers more satisfied than job holders. Career workers also reported more positive feelings about work now, $F(1,43)=9.510$, $p < .01$, and higher lifetime satisfaction with income producing work, $F(1,98)=14.100$, $p < .001$. The income levels of the two groups followed a similar pattern suggesting that income level might be related to the difference in satisfaction. When correlations between total income and these variables were computed separately for the two groups, however, no significant correlations were found.

Variations in life satisfaction can thus be found among the Terman women as a function of lifetime career pattern. Career workers were consistently more satisfied than income workers, particularly in regard to work-related variables.

Retirement and career pattern

Insert Table 2 about here

Ambitions and aspirations. When retirement and career pattern effects were examined in regard to motivational and activity variables, an interesting pattern of results emerged. Retired workers reported significantly more ambition in regard to maintaining an excellent standard of living, $F(1,96)=7.38$, $p < .01$ than did full-time workers, a result which is understandable in view of the economic changes that accompany retirement. In addition, a significant interaction was found on ambition in regard to excellence in work, $F(1,95)=3.019$, $p < .05$, with retired career workers reporting more ambition than full-time career workers and retired job holders reporting less ambition than full-time job holders (see Table 3 for means). A trend on ambition in proficiency in regard to hobbies, $F(1,96)=2.783$, $p < .10$, also occurred, with retired career

workers, and retired job holders less than full-time job holders, with full-time career workers scoring the lowest.

Insert Table 3 about here

These two interactions on ambition variables reflect the differential lifestyles and attitudes of career and noncareer workers, and represent advantages for lifetime career involvement for later life. Retired job holders' lower ambition in regard to excellence in work appears to be related to the fact that their motivations for employment are primarily economic. Therefore, once they were no longer paid for their work, they ceased to be psychologically involved in it. Career subjects who were retired, however, reported an even higher level of ambition in excellence in work than those working full-time, reflecting the intrinsic nature of their work involvement, and the fact that career related activities can often be continued into the retirement years. In addition, although career full-time workers scored lower than both groups of job holders, retired career workers show a level of ambition in regard to avocational pursuits and hobbies comparable to that of job holders. Career workers, thus, possess high motivation in retirement with respect to both work and leisure activities.

Activities. Retired subjects reported a higher level of participation in activities on the sociability scale than did full-time subjects, $F(1,100)=4.414$, $p < .05$ (see Table 2 for means). In addition, in a marginal finding, $F(1,96)=2.675$, $p < .11$, the interaction with respect to achievement motivation activities suggested that retired job holders are less involved in this type of activity than the other three groups. Subjects in retirement were also less involved in activities reflecting intellectual vitality, $F(1,98)=3.134$, $p < .10$. Retired subjects, however, reported taking up more

activities recently, F (1,100)=4.100, $p < .05$.

To better understand the relationship of activity involvement to retirement, correlational analyses were carried out among the four activity scales, the 3-point measure of present happiness, and the overall level of satisfaction in income producing work and avocational pursuits and hobbies (see Table 4 for correlations). Interestingly, for full-time career workers, participation in activities requiring achievement motivation and intellectual vitality is positively related to present happiness and level of satisfaction with income producing work. For retired career workers, however, participation in these activities is correlated with satisfaction with hobbies, suggesting that hobbies become an outlet for intellectual and achievement pursuits for professional women upon retirement. In addition, retired career workers show a positive correlation between the recreational orientation scale and present happiness, while the correlation is negative for full-time career workers, suggesting that these activities become more important sources of satisfaction once the demands of career pursuit are over.

Insert Table 4 about here

Present happiness is positively correlated with activities involving sociability for full-time job holders. This result probably reflects a different life orientation from career workers. Interestingly, for full-time job holders, participation in activites involving intellectual vitality is negatively related to happiness and work satisfaction, suggesting that for women who are intellectually vital, working at a job that is not stimulating is unsatisfying. For retired job holders, however, we find positive correlations between the intellectual vitality scale and happiness and satisfaction

with hobbies, suggesting that once intellectually vital job holders have retired, they are free to pursue their intellectual interests in the realm of hobbies and avocational pursuits, thus contributing to their life satisfaction. In addition, the correlation of activities reflecting achievement motivation with satisfaction with hobbies for full-time job holders, may indicate that hobbies serve as a means of achievement not available in the work place.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study clearly show that job holders are less advantaged than career women in the aging years. These findings are in accord with a study of bachelor's level women with children, who differed with respect to job or career involvement reported by Holahan & Gilbert (1979). Women with jobs experienced more role conflict than did those with careers, and in addition, women with jobs experienced high levels of satisfaction only in their family roles, while women with careers experienced high life satisfaction in both work and family roles. The women in the present study showed a similar pattern of results in that although income workers and career women did not differ in satisfaction in family areas, they did differ in satisfaction with work. It therefore appears that for intellectually able women, career involvement is more advantageous than job involvement in later as well as earlier adult life.

Over the years there has been considerable debate and discussion as to the accuracy of activity versus disengagement theories as descriptions of the aging process, and to the advantages of these styles for successful aging (Cumming & Henry, 1961; Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953; Havighurst, Neugarten, & Tobin, 1968; Maddox, 1970). The retirement data in the present study indicate that aging may include aspects of both disengagement and activity, and that individuals with different orientations toward work may adjust to retirement differently. Retired subjects in this sample increased their level of activity

in socializing, and in the number of activities they have taken up in recent years. Retired subjects, however, are less involved in activities such as reading, that involve an intellectual orientation. Perhaps this reflects a greater interpersonal orientation among employed women when they are retired, for which they may not have had time while they were working.

Retirement clearly means different things for career and noncareer workers. Career workers continue some motivational involvement with their work, an involvement which is simply dropped by job holders. Career workers appear to be able to transfer some of their intellectual interest from their work to their hobbies. For job holders, intellectual vitality also finds an outlet in hobbies, which is a contrast to the role it played in their work lives.

In conclusion, this study of the Terman women has shown significant variations in activity involvement and life satisfaction in relation to lifetime achievement patterns and retirement. Future studies will be necessary to determine whether these findings for the Terman women may be generalized to the total population of aging women, and follow-ups will be needed to determine whether the relationships between career patterns and other variables found in this study will continue to hold as these women move toward advanced aging.

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Table 1

Means on Selected Life Satisfaction, Work, and Activity Variables by Lifetime Career Pattern

		Career Pattern					
		Career Workers			Job Holders		
Variable	Scale Range	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N
Satisfaction with Present Living Arrangements	1-5	4.59*	.66	75	4.10	.80	30
Overall Lifetime Satisfaction	1-5	4.39*	.37	62	4.21	.44	27
Feelings about Work Now	1-5	4.55**	.56	33	3.80	.86	15
Lifetime Satisfaction with Income Work	1-5	4.62***	.59	73	4.07	.91	30

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

Table 2

Means on Selected Variables by Retirement Status

Variable	Scale Range	Fulltime (N=39) Mean	SD	Retired (N=66) Mean	SD
Ambition in maintaining an Excellent Standard of Living	1-5	2.86***	.87	3.35	.99
Sociability Activities	1-4	2.82**	.58	3.04	.51
Intellectual Vitality Activities	1-4	2.95*	.55	2.75	.54
Number of Activities Taken Up Recently	0-7	.23**	2.19	.79	1.55

*$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$

Table 3

Means on Ambition in Regard to Work and Hobbies

by Retirement and Career Status

	Ambition in Regard to Excellence in Work			Ambition in Regard to Proficiency in Hobbies		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N
Career workers						
Full-time	3.96	.81	24	3.29	1.08	24
Retired	4.37	.70	49	3.63	.86	49
Job holders						
Full-time	4.15	.69	13	3.69	.75	13
Retired	3.79	.80	14	3.40	.99	15

Table 4

Correlations Between Activity Scales and Happiness, Work Satisfaction, and Satisfaction with Hobbies for Full-Time and Retired Career Workers and Job Holders

	Happiness		Work		Hobbies	
	Full-time Career (N=18)	Retired Career (N=44)	Full-time Career (N=18)	Retired Career (N=44)	Full-time Career (N=18)	Retired Career (N=44)
Sociability	.13	.24	.25	-.09	-.08	.13
Achievement Motivation	.41	.20	.57	-.10	.22	.40
Intellectual Vitality	.48	.12	.57	-.03	.00	.34
Recreational Orientation	-.11	.29	.24	.31	-.04	.05
	Full-time Job (N=15)	Retired Job (N=12)	Full-time Job (N=15)	Retired Job (N=12)	Full-time Job (N=15)	Retired Job (N=12)
Sociability	.50	.24	.17	-.21	.06	.20
Achievement Motivation	-.06	.16	-.12	-.11	.41	-.09
Intellectual Vitality	-.62	.29	-.64	-.52	-.26	.46
Recreational Orientation	-.06	.17	.20	-.04	.15	.31

Note: For full-time career, $r_{.10}=.38$; $r_{.05}=.44$; $r_{.01}=.56$

For retired career, $r_{.10}=.24$; $r_{.05}=.29$; $r_{.01}=.37$

For full-time job, $r_{.10}=.41$; $r_{.05}=.48$; $r_{.01}=.61$

For retired job, $r_{.10}=.46$; $r_{.05}=.53$; $r_{.01}=.66$